



Creating Standards-based Units

Why go this route?

- Because standards and the more detailed Grade Level Content Expectations that flow from them reflect the knowledge, understanding and skills valued most by experts in the disciplines they represent.
- Because a focus on explicit Expectations enlivens classrooms, by inspiring creativity and promoting inquiry.
- Because Expectations-based units of study are designed to ensure that every student can learn at high levels.

You'll know you've arrived when...

- Expectations are tied into the curriculum.
- Student achievement data is used to determine which Expectations need mastery.
- Grade-level teams plan Expectations-based units together.
- Content expectations and benchmarks identified for a unit are assessed explicitly.
- Student achievement is tracked by Expectations mastered, rather than by assignments.
- Student achievement data follows the student from teacher to teacher.
- Unit plans are communicated to parents, students and school staff.

Construction Zone

- Plan to have district curriculum specialists on hand for your unit-writing workshop.
- Have current student achievement data available for staff review at the workshop.
- Have copies of Grade Level Content Expectations available.

It's about **TIME**


- Devote one full professional development day for the Expectations-based Unit-writing Workshop.
- Designate another 1-2 grade-level meetings to finish writing the individual lessons for the unit.

Potential **COSTS**

- Copying of workshop materials

The Process

*A step-by-step guide
to creating instructional
units built around standards-
based Expectations*

NOTE: Steps marked with a  are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

1 Review school achievement data in preparation for building a unit that addresses gaps in achievement. Give each teacher his/her Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE's) in either hard or electronic copy.

Ask them to identify the standards that students in their grade mastered, based on their most current achievement data. The MI-Map disk and website contain ELA and Mathematics GLCEs.

2 Publish the results. Create an Expectations Bulletin in newsletter format (using a desktop publishing tool) or create an Expectations Bulletin Board to post conclusions.

INSERT for Step 2 is a worksheet that grade-level teams could use to analyze their students' achievement data.

3 Plan a school-wide Expectations-based Unit Writing professional development day. The day's goal is for each grade-level to complete a draft of an Expectations-based unit that can be taught during the current school year.

Have district curriculum directors on hand to help facilitate the sessions and answer questions from the staff. Repeat the process annually to accumulate a collection of Expectations-based units for your school, built around real achievement needs.

INSERT for Step 3 serves as a prototype agenda for your day. Worksheets 3A–3I are included to support each agenda item. (Lesson-writing can begin, but won't be finished.)

Choose from the Expectations you identified as needing mastery. Refer back to Step 2.

- A. Write an "AIM" for the unit.
- B. Connect the unit to students' lives.
- C. Write Essential Questions for inquiry and exploration.
- D. Plan for formative assessments to suggest course corrections.
- E. Write lessons.
- F. Plan authentic instruction.
- G. Write performance goals.
- H. Communicate criteria for success to students.
- I. Design a reflective process for teachers and students.

4 Make grade-level time for finishing lesson-writing.

5 Agree on schedules for when each unit will be taught.

6 Record expectation-based student performance in a common format that can be passed on from teacher to teacher. Insert for Step 6 is available on the MI-Map disk or website.

See MI-Map packet 6:1 *Planning Your Moves Toward Standards* for MI-Map's suggested Excel-based tracking system. Or adapt and develop your own.

7 Let everyone know about your standards-based unit project. Educate parents and students about the importance of standards with a Hooray for Standards kick-off event before beginning to teach a unit.

Err on the side of too much information. Tell parents, other teachers and building administrators your plans, of course, but then keep going to include bus-drivers, food-service people, secretaries and volunteers as well. Have fun "advertising" the learning coming up!

Getting more mileage from creating Expectations-based units

How developing units focused on specific Grade Level

Content Expectations benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- NCLB uses Michigan's MEAP scores as its measure of student achievement. Aligning your curriculum with the standards and expectations of the Michigan Curriculum Framework (on which MEAP is based) is a first step to being sure students are working at the things they'll be assessed on.

Education YES!

- Michigan's school report cards also use MEAP scores as one of the measures of school performance. Aligning curriculum—lessons and units—to standards and expectations from the Michigan Curriculum Framework gives students the best chance to excel on that measure.

MI-Plan

- Step 6, pages 25-47 is *Aligning the State of Michigan Requirements, Action Plans and Assessments*. This step addresses the state's Benchmarks and Expectations, and guides a school in thinking through its action plans from that point of view. A self-evaluation process for looking at strategies is included, using a strategies/interventions rubric.



Resources

Books

Concept-based Curriculum and Instruction Teaching Beyond the Facts

**Lynn H. Erickson. Corwin Press,
Thousand Oaks, CA 2002**

A good blend of theory, explanation and illustrative practice. Helps think about a discipline like an expert would, and teach students to do the same.

How to Use Standards in the Classroom

**Douglas Harris, Judy Carr.
ASCD, Alexandria, VA 1996.**

These are experienced educators who offer lots of practical examples of how to coordinate standards (and topics, products, performances and rubrics) with existing curricula.

Understanding by Design

**Wiggins, Grant and McTighe, Jay.
ASCD, Alexandria, VA 2002.**

This practitioners' guide to unit design lays out the logic of "backward design" that works from curriculum to assessment and THEN to instruction. Offers its own unit design template.

People

Specialists

Most Intermediate School Districts have a specialist working with schools on curriculum alignment in their service areas.

Coaches

The *Alliance for Building Capacity in Schools* website lists coaches whose training has been provided by Michigan State University and supported by the Michigan Department of Education. Some are experienced in school improvement implementation in Michigan schools. Please visit:

www.abcscoaches.org

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